DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 134 915 CG 011 154

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TITLE Spalding Junior High, Unit 1 Dropout Prevention Program. Maxi 2 Practicum.
PUB DATE 9 Apr 76
NOTE 78p.; Ed. D. Dissertation, Nova University; Best Copy Available, some pages may reproduce poorly

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$4.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Alternative Schools; *Discipline Problems; *Dropout Identification; *Dropout Prevention; *Educationally Disadvantaged; Educational Strategies; *Family School Relationship; Parent Counseling; Parent Teacher Conferences; Program Descriptions; Secondary Education; Truancy; Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to develop strategies to reduce the dropout rate at Spalding Junior High, Unit 1, Griffin, Georgia. Potential dropouts were identified and specific strategies were used to assist students in solving problems which caused them to become potential dropouts. Some of the strategies developed were: (1) faculty intervention with dropout prevention plans; (2) positive identification of potential dropouts; (3) personal counseling of selected students; (4) parental counseling; and (5) placement of students in alternative schools. The dropout rate was reduced from 11.58% to 5.26% as a result. Of the 95 potential identified dropouts, 23 remained in school. Teacher attitudes towards the potential dropout have shown improvement. The potential dropout has also shown more interest in school activities as a result of the instituted strategies. (Author)

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SPALDING JUNIOR HIGH, UNIT I DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

by

Joe C. Wilson

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, Nova University

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Atlanta Cluster
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Maxi II Practicum
April 9, 1976

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Practicum was to develop strategies which would reduce the dropout rate of student attending Spalding Junior High, Unit I, Griffin, Georgia. Potential dropouts were identified and specific strategies were utilized to counsel and assist students in solving problems which caused them to become potential dropouts.

Some of the strategies utilized were: (1) Faculty intervention with dropout prevention plans, (2) Positive identification of potential dropouts, (3) Personal counseling of selected students, (4) Parental counseling, and (5) Placement of students in alternative schools.

The dropout rate was reduced from 11.58 per cent to 5.26 per cent as a result of the strategies developed as part of the Practicum. A total of 23 of the 95 potential identified dropouts remained in school this year.

In addition, teacher attitudes towards the potential dropout has been improved. Also, the potential dropout has shown more interest in school activities as a result of the instituted strategies.

This change in the dropout rate during the year of this practicum lends itself to a continuation for the coming year.

SPALDING JUNIOR HIGH, UNIT I DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

Joe C. Wilson[1]

INTRODUCTION

The Griffin-Spalding County School System is not unlike many other systems in the South which was caught up in the integration process in the early 1970's with little planning for the problems it faced.

Spalding County is located approximately 30 miles south of Atlanta. The majority of its 40,000 people work in industrial plants with the exception of a few farmers. The school population consists of approximately 12,000 students. Its ethnic make-up is approximately 70 per cent white and 30 per cent black.

At the time when the system was ordered to reorganize or integrate, students were housed in a black junior high, a white junior high, a black high

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[1]Principal, Spalding Junior High, Unit I, Griffin, Georgia 30223; 818 students.

school, and a white high school. After the court order was handed down, the administration secured the services of the Center for School Desegregation of the University of Georgia to help in the reorganization study.

At the conclusion of the study it was recommended that the present organization structure be adopted which consists of the following:

Seventh grade at Unit III (old black high school)

Eighth grade at Unit II (old white junior high school)

Ninth grade at Unit I (old Spalding County High school)

Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth grades at old white high school.

From this organization each school has become a unit within itself, which is believed to be one of the main causes for the high rate of dropouts after completion of the eighth grade.

THE PROBLEM

The state of Georgia has led the nation for many years in the number of students dropping out of school before high school graduation. Griffin-Spalding County System is one of the top ten in retention rate. However, a large number of students continue to leave school as dropouts. Data show that Spalding Junior High School, Unit I, or ninth grade school, has a higher dropout rate than the state average. It also furnishes the Griffin-Spalding County System with 25 per cent of its dropouts.

It has been the top priority of this participant to develop and implement a plan that would reduce the flight of so many students upon completion of the eighth grade and during the ninth grade year.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature surveyed on the school dropout has been a great help in answering the question of "What can be done to save the potential dropout?" Although every community is faced with a different set of problems, the dropout appears to possess similar characteristics in all communities.

For clarification purposes the literature surveyed during the development of this Practicum is being divided into two groups as follows:

I. Literature pertaining to the identification of the dropout.

II. Literature pertaining to the treatment of the dropout.

I. Identification of the Dropout

Literature as it pertains to the identification of the potential dropout varies with each study. Thornburg[1], in his study of entering freshmen in a rural Arizona high school from four ethnic groups, identified the potential

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[1]Hershell D. Thornburg, An Investigation of Attitudes Among Potential Dropouts from Minority Groups During Their Fresnman Year in High School, National Center for Research and Development, U. S. Department of of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1971-1972.

dropout at the beginning of the academic year according to the following criteria: (a) if they were low in academic potential as measured by Academic Promise Test, (b) if they were below average in intelligence as measured by the Otis Quick Scoring Test, (c) eighth grade teacher appraisal of each student, (d) attendance records, (e) academic records, and (f) if they were overaged.

According to Van Dyke and Hoyt[2], who conducted an extensive study of dropouts in Iowa schools, six main characteristics associated with the potential dropout were listed as follows:

1. They find school too difficult.
2. Achievement levels of the dropout, particularly in reading and mathematics, are below grade level.
3. Potential dropouts tend to feel unaccepted in the school environment.
4. Frequent absenteeism takes place.
5. Students felt psychologically dropped, or excluded.
6. Students leave school at 16, as most states require attendance until age 16.

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[2]L. A. Van Dyke and K. B. Hoyt, The Dropout Problem in Iowa High Schools, Des Moines: Iowa State Department of Public Instruction, 1958, pp. 9, 12, 19.

In West Virginia, at the request of the State Senate, Brennan[3] found that the main causes of dropouts were due to failure, home circumstances, conflicts with teachers, need to work, marriage, and military service. He recommended an industrial arts curriculum should be instituted in all school districts as prevention.

Mock[4], working with the Houston Independent School District, used as a means of identification of the potential dropout the simple I. Q. score--14 years old with two years retardation.

In a different approach to the problems of students in today's schools, Driekurs and Grey[5] tend to blame adults for fear of too much freedom. They state:

> We Americans seem unable to deal yet with the kind and amount of liberty that today's women, children, Negroes, and labor unions are attaining. We are looking to the authoritarian

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[3]Thomas J. Brennan, Industrial Arts and High School Dropouts, Charleston, W. Va.: West Virginia State Senate, 1963.

[4]Jozie M. Mock, Report on Talent Preservation of the Junior High Schools of Houston Independent School District, A report made to the Houston Independent School District, 1961, pp. 7.

[5]M. D. Dreikurs and Loren Grey, A New Approach to Discipline: Logical Consequences, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961, p. 19.

> methods of the past as a means to resolve our tension over this issue. All extremist movements in politics, in education, in parent-child training have their roots in this same fear. The hate we see growing all around us is in the result. In reality, there is no ill of democracy which cannot be cured by more democracy.

II. Treatment of the Dropout

When the dropout has been identified, the treatment becomes a very complex affair. Ideas and problems are plentiful but solving them becomes most difficult. The solutions usually have a tendency to represent the training and experience of the author or person suggesting what is needed.

Bernhardt[6] in a study of Child Guidance and Discipline suggested: "The greatest need of the adolescent is to have faith, trust, confidence, and support of someone, preferably his own parents."

Yeager[7] in his study of Administration and the Pupil states:

> Not only must each youth upon reaching adulthood find himself able to participate effectively in

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[6]Kurt L. Bernhardt, Discipline and Child Guidance, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962, p. 281.

[7]William A. Yeager, Administration and the Pupil, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949-1963, p. 36.

> in the social life of his community, but he must become occupationally adjusted, performing the kind of work which he is clearly qualified for.

School dropouts, as proven by all studies, are those students who do not have faith, trust, and confidence in themselves, their peers, or teachers. Programs of many kinds have been tried to restore confidence. Kilbane and Fleming[8], working in the Cleveland Public Schools, designed a project to rehabilitate ninth grade students centered around a workshop setting. Programs in block scheduled instruction were integrated with vocational training. As a motivating factor students were paid on an hourly basis.

A project developed by Easley[9] in the Spartanburg County South Carolina School System is very similar to this participant's plan for Spalding Junior High, Unit I. Easley states:

> The point is made that a dropout generally is a person who does not see his public education as related to his particular needs or goals. Recommendations of the study are: (1) Establish a regularized school-community input and feedback system to enable parents, students and community

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[8]Marian Kilbane and Margaret Fleming, Production Workshop Project, Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Public Schools, 1972.

[9]Edgar M. Easley, Dropout Prevention Study of the Spartanburg City Schools, Spartanburg, S. C.: CLS/ Communication and Education Services, Inc., 1971.

> persons to provide both input and feedback related to curriculum and teaching methodologies; (2) Institute a comprehensive and coordinated pre-school program to diagnose, remediate, and alleviate learning difficulties in pre-school children; (3) Provide experiences to ease the transition from elementary to junior high schools; (4) Introduce added vocational majors and courses into the high school and added academic offerings into the vocational school; (5) Establish a comprehensive Secondary Academy and Adult Education Center to afford opportunities for students seventeen years of age or older to attend classes that would earn high school credit.

Lichter, Rapien, Seibert, and Skylansky[10] report on a study of potential dropouts in the Chicago Public Schools. They used casework treatment for both student and parent in attempts to retain the student in school. To study this situation, the Scholarship and Guidance Association, a counseling agency specializing in the treatment of the emotional and educational problems of adolescents, undertook a research project. It was designed as a study-in-depth, using casework treatment as the method of observation and data collection. The study centered around these issues:

> Are there links between emotional and familial problems at home, underachievement and behavioral

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[10] Solomon O. Lichter, Elsie B. Rapien, Frances M. Seibert, and Morris A. Skylansky, The Drop-out, New York: The Free Press, 1962, pp. V, 41, 51, 258.

problems at school, and dropping out of school?

Are school problems reactive to the nonlearning aspects of school--the personalities of the teachers, school rules and regulations?

How does the student use school as a battleground to settle problems from other areas of his life?

Can counseling, by resolving the emotional problems, improve academic achievement and behavior, and prevent premature school leaving?

What are the earliest danger signals of emotional disturbance that can be most easily detected in the classroom, which forecast poor school adjustment in high school?

The Scholarship and Guidance Association determined that five categories of major psychodynamic uses of school resulting in difficulty were sufficient for classification of the students:

a. School difficulty resulting from unsuccessful handling of impulse or need.

b. School difficulty resulting from maladaptive superego reactions.

c. School difficulty resulting from the student's attempt to use school to resolve a conflict belonging to another area of life.

d. School difficulty only one manifestation of a general personality problem.

e. School difficulty resulting from reality problems.

The Scholarship and Guidance Association agreed that

parent categories should vary only slightly to that of students. They list six categories:

Parent Classification

a. Student's school life exacerbating the parent's problem of impulse or need.

b. Parents' involvement in the student's school life resulting from maladaptive reactions to the superego.

c. Parents involvement in the student's school life resulting from an overvalued school ego-ideal.

d. Student's school life receiving no special focus; another element in the parent's generalized personality disturbance.

e. Parent's reality problems affecting his involvement in the student's school life.

f. Student's school life used by the parent in an attempt to resolve a personality conflict belonging to another.

After completion of the treatment of the 107 students identified, the agency reported that casework treatment had helped. Seventy-seven per cent of those identified as dropouts remained in school.

In the book, Profile of the School Dropout, the writers are highly critical of present day American schools. They find the schools at fault in their ability to educate the potential dropout and the culturally

disadvantaged student. Friedenberg[11], in his paper "An Idealogy of School Withdrawal," states that: "So far as I know, public support of education in this country has never been justified on the grounds that education was beneficial to the individual student."

Paul Goodman[12] in his contribution to Profile of the School Dropout states :

> At present, our society does not know how to cope with these youth, and really isn't interested. I fear that most of the concern for the dropout is because they are a nuisance and a threat and can't be socialized by existing machinery.

The literature of all authors reviewed appear to have many of the same ideas, the same concerns, and the same desire to see improvements made to improve the retention rate of students throughout the nation. Of all the authors studied by this participant, Daniel Schrieber[13] in his paper on work experience, included in Profile of School Dropout, says it best:

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[11]Edgar Z. Friedenberg, "An Idealogy of School Withdrawal," Profile of the School Dropout, New York: Random House, 1967, p. 10.

[12]Paul Goodman, "The Universal Trap," Profile of the School Dropout, New York: Random House, 1967, p. 11.

[13]Daniel Schrieber, "Work Experience Programs," Profile of the School Dropout, New York: Random House, 1967, pp. 272-273.

> The failure to secure and hold a job is a severe blow to anyone; the blow is more severe to the dropout, to the school failure, to alienated youth. When he was in school he learned that he was good at nothing. Now he is told in no uncertain terms that he is good for nothing.

He recommends that school-based work experience programs be established to give the maladjusted student a chance to become a part of the American main stream. These programs, he says, will:

1. Encourage and permit alienated youth to improve their self images and self concept.
2. Enable them to learn and exercise self-discipline and to develop proper work habits and work attitudes.
3. Enable them to attain at least minimum levels of education and work skills which are marketable.
4. Offer alienated youth opportunities to relate themselves with and to other persons and encourage them to do so.
5. Give direct and indirect satisfaction to the individual in knowing that he can both undertake and complete a job satisfactorily.

Cervantes[14] in his study of causes and cures of the dropout centered his study on five general hypotheses.

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[14] Lucius F. Cervantes, The Dropout--Causes and Cures, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966, p. 8.

These areas seem to encompass most of the characteristics of the potential dropout. In conclusion, he points out several valid things that the school, family, and community can do for the potential dropout.

The five hypotheses as stated are:

(1) The Family of the Dropout: The dropout is reared in a family which has less solidarity, less primary relatedness, and less paternal influence than does the family in which the graduate is reared.

(2) The Friend-Family System: The dropout is brought up in a family which has fewer close friends and fewer "problem-free" friends than does the family in which the graduate is brought up.

(3) The Peer Group: The dropout's personal friends will be typically not approved by his parents. The resulting "independent youth culture" of the dropout will be in sharp contrast to the youth culture of the graduate whose friends are parentally approved and thus integrated with the adult culture.

(4) School Experiences: The dropout was in trouble at school when he terminated his education and was but slightly involved in any school-related activities throughout his academic career.

(5) Thematic Apperception Test Protocols: Our hypothesis is that the phantasy life of the dropout as manifested by the TAT is more characterized by unrestrained Id themes and that of the graduate more characterized by restrained superego

> themes. The youth culture of the dropout will prove to be a culture of revolution, aggression, frustration, and protest; in the words of Conant, it will be found to be "explosive . . . It is social dynamite."

A 1973 publication of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare[15] summarizes 12 dropout prevention projects as follows:

1. Project ARISE, Tuskeegee, Alabama
2. Project MACK, Oakland, California
3. Project OUTREACH, Sheridan Colorado
4. Project MAS, Hartford, Connecticut
5. Project VIII, Paducah, Kentucky
6. Project KAPS, Baltimore, Maryland
7. Project PROCESS, Fall River, Massachusetts
8. Project NALAC, Detroit, Michigan
9. Project STAY, St. Louis, Missouri
10. Project EMERGE, Dayton, Ohio
11. Adult Attitude and Student Prevention Program, Pine Ridge, South Dakota
12. Project CADRE, Seattle, Washington

This participant was Superintendent of Macon County Schools, Tuskeegee, Alabama in 1969 when the project was

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[15]U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Positive Approaches to Dropout Prevention, 1973.

written and was familiar with many of the problems which existed at that time.

Project ARISE set about Arranging for Reorganizing Instruction for Success in Education in Macon County. The summary of Project ARISE[16] states:

> A survey of research on the dropout problem resulted in the identification of five general factors which appear to be related to the internal problems of the school in its relationship to the dropout:
> ----Grade level placement two or more years below average for grade
> ----Consistent failure to achieve in school-works
> ----Reading achievement level two or more years below the grade placement norm
> ----Absent in excess of nine days per year
> ----Currently failing in two or more courses
> The research does not isolate any of these factors as being the reason for dropping out of school but shows a high degree of relationships between the existence of the factors among those who do drop out. Among the target population of this proposal a sample demonstrated the existence of at least one of these five characteristics as being observable by the teachers with those students.

Project OUTREACH[17] was a federal program which had as its target area Sheridan School District Number Two, Sheridan, Colorado. Minority group members were proposed

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[16] Ibid., p. 4.

[17] Ibid., p. 13.

of Chicano, black, and American Indian, and constituted 30 per cent of the school age population. The dropouts in Sheridan focused the tragic criticisms of the public school, but the project seemed to have achieved magnificent results. A summary of the feelings of the dropouts and the results of the program is as follows:

> Sheridan has good traditional schools which focus on general education and college-bound students. For the potential dropout, however, the schools are perceived as irrelevant, non-caring, authoritarian, impersonal, and too strenuous. Dropouts have indicated that they feel alienated by the traditional academically centered routine, behavior and dress codes, lost human values, lack of teacher belief in the student's ability to learn, and the absence of faculty-student trust.
>
> Project OUTREACH is providing innovative, relevant programs which reach and hold potential dropouts. In 1971-72, the first school year of operation Project OUTREACH evaluation results show that the dropout rate for the target high school decreased from 15 to 5 per cent. Also significant is a decrease in the absentee rate for all students grades 7-12 from 11 per cent in 1970-71 to 7 per cent in 1971-72, the reduction in "D" and "F" grades from 51 per cent in 1970-71 to 17 per cent in 1971-72, and the marked improvement in student attitudes toward school, authority, and their environment.

This Nova participant has merely selected from a few of the many sources which have been examined in this review. Disppointment resulted from receiving little

information on the dropout from the Georgia State Department of Education. Apparently, the Department has tightened up on the release of such information in light of recent laws or other reasons.

The major authorities are in agreement on the causes of the dropout, the treatment, and retention. Dropout prevention in a school the size of Spalding Junior High, Unit I would require the full time of several skilled and sympathetic teachers.

CONCEPTUALIZING A SOLUTION

To attack this problem it was realized that before any treatment could be applied for the unhappy, dissatisfied or failing student, he would first have to be identified as a potential dropout. A process of identification was discussed with the faculty, counselors, and assistant principal on the school level, and the supervisor of instruction and curriculum director of the central office staff.

The plan used in an attempt to identify potential dropouts was as follows:

1. To consult with the principals and counselors in the eighth grade school concerning students with dropout-prone characteristics.
2. To identify all over-age students and attempt to find out if the over-age students have a greater dropout rate.
3. To study test scores to determine if low achievers and non-achievers have a tendency to drop out.
4. To study teacher grades to determine if there is a relationship between the dropout rate and

ability as measured by test scores.

5. To study the effect of irregular attendance and frequent tardiness on dropout-prone students.
6. To determine why there is non-participation in extra-curricular activities.
7. To locate those children with serious physical or emotional handicaps.
8. To locate frequent disciplinary problems.
9. To attempt to determine why there is consistent failure to achieve in regular school work.

Several meetings were held between the principals and counselors of the two schools to discuss and study the problem student before coming to the ninth grade.

As a result of these meetings, plus hours of study with individual records during the months of July and August, a list of potential dropouts was made. This list of students was given to the scheduling committee. This committee was given the task of steering the potential dropouts into courses such as Industrial Arts, Basic Math and English, and Business Education. Each of these students was called in for a conference with

the counselor to discuss what he had chosen and what the committee thought best suited for him/her.

The list of potential dropouts was also given to all teachers. Teachers were asked to keep a close watch on the progress or lack of progress of these students and report to the principal any unusual changes in behavior, attitude, or study habits.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE POTENTIAL DROPOUT

When the process of identifying the potential dropout in the ninth grade of Spalding Junior High, Unit I was completed, a list of 95 names appeared. This was equal to 11.61 per cent of the total enrollment of 818 and was seemingly an unreasonable forecast by the participant and his co-workers. As a result another meeting was held to further scrutinize each of the potential dropouts' school records. This year's ninth grade class was found to have many low and non-achievers.

Many reasons were given for this particular class having such a large number of low achievers and non-achievers. The most frequently used reason was the fact that this class was the first class fully integrated in 1970. This experience is thought to be responsible for many of the students' frustrations. At any rate, after discussing and studying the records of the large number of potential dropouts, the list was not reduced.

There has been a tremendous amount of literature written on the identification of the dropout, but no one seems to have found a sure method of dropout prevention. These vary widely on how and when a potential dropout can

be identified. Schrieber[18] recommended in his study on school dropouts in 1964 that identification begin as early as the primary grades. The symptoms of the dropout are easily detected by a person who has spent a number of years in educational work; however, many methods have been developed for this purpose which range from teacher recommendations to check lists, and standardized instruments.

The treatment of the potential dropout in Spalding Junior High, Unit I was foremost in this participant's mind. Information on the subject of what to do with the dropout once he is identified is very scarce. Many authorities have recognized the problem and made general suggestions as to how it might be solved, but there are few specific methods or techniques known.

Our main concern was to attempt to diagnose the dropout problem areas in which we were most capable of doing an indepth job. The problem areas considered were curriculu, vocational, academic education program; vocational technical training; peer group counseling; and

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[18]Daniel Schrieber, Guidance and the School Dropout, Washington: National Education Association, 1964.

individual and family counseling.

In previous years students were given a choice of courses to be offered the following year and asked to select those subjects they wanted to study. These courses would run for the full year, or the semester system as we referred to it. If the student failed month after month, he was continued in the class for the entire school year. Many students became restless, disinterested, and eventually discipline problems. Many students simply walked away.

In 1974-1975 the quarter system was begun. New teacher-made course guides were developed and used. This system helps in working out a schedule for the student who is having trouble by scheduling shorter time periods in each class. Thus the low interest level student has the choice of the quarter he wishes to study a particular subject.

The curriculum has also allowed most of the potential dropouts some measure of success.

The Griffin-Spalding County School System is generous in that it provides each of its schools with a principal

for 12 months with a full-time secretary, assistant principal, and counselor. The additional time allowed a complete study of students' records in order to solve many problems encountered as a part of this practicum.

The records of all ninth grade students were sent to the junior high school unit on July 1, 1975. They were immediately divided among the counselors and principal for study. All records, after being reviewed, were categorized into four groups according to student grades: (1) grade average of A, (2) grade average of B or higher, (3) grade average of C or higher, and (4) grade average D or below. Within each group birthdates were checked to see if they had progressed at the proper age-grade level. Both over and under achievers were grouped for extremes on either side of the grading scale. The interpretation of the test scores indicated low achievers were usually potential dropouts.

Neither the teachers nor the participant was pleased with the referral forms used during 1974-1975. Teachers complained that it took too much of their time to put in writing the problems facing the student involved. A promise was made to the faculty that efforts would be made

to develop or secure a better way of reporting to the principal, assistant principal, or counselor information needed for an effective conference and to relieve the teacher of written detailed information.

A search was made of available literature for ways which teachers communicate and interact after using referral forms. After gathering a number of formats, the faculty endorsed the form in Figure 1 which was developed by the New York Holding Power Project of 1956 with some modification. (See Figure 1)

When the teacher completes this referral form, it is directed to the proper person for a conference with the student. After studying the teacher referral, the conference is held. If it is believed that more could be accomplished with a follow-up conference with the parents, such a conference is arranged as soon as possible. The referring teacher is then notified of the conference results and steps taken.

A. What the Student Thinks

To effectively carry out this Practicum has required a great amount of meeting, talking, and listening. Many people have been confronted and asked: What do you think

FIGURE 1

TEACHER REFERRAL FORM

To: Principal _____

Asst. Prin. _____

Counselor _____

Student Name _____

Based on observation and participation in classroom work, this student could benefit from a conference with you regarding areas checked.

Teacher's Sig. _____

_____ Always tired
_____ Appears Anemic
_____ Does very little work in class
_____ Often late to class
_____ Absent frequently
_____ Seeks attention of others
_____ Disrespectful to teacher
_____ Never has material for class work
_____ Open disrespect for parents
_____ Others--Explain

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

would help to keep more children in school? This has included students, parents, business men, and professionals, other than teachers. The following is a list of comments as written by a group of students in an accelerated English class:

(1) More days of dress-up in schools. And have an annual track and field day, softball game between faculty and students. Schools right now don't have enough activity days to keep students satisfied or interested. When principals take away privileges the rate goes up. An example is: Our homeroom had perfect attendance a lot before the lunch was changed. Now we hardly ever have it.

(2) One thing that could be done is let the ones that want to drop out drop out, but don't let them get a job. Tell 'em you have to be 16 and have finished high school.

(3) To keep lower the drop-out rate, teachers should make the classes more interesting. Students should only pick the courses that might interest some. Not just take a course because a friend is taking it. Also, the school feels like a prison. Who wants to go to a place, day after day where the sickening green walls make you sleepy, and the classes are boring, and there's not even a decent bathroom around.

(4) To reduce the dropout rate, I suggest that old-fashioned, reactionary ideas should be tossed out of the school system. Students look for new ideas and concepts today.

(5) I think that the drop-out rate cannot really be improved by the teachers and counselors doing anything more. They already do their very best. It's up to the students. If only

everyone knew what a good education means. A better job. You can really make everyone prouder of you when you work harder to make the most of your life. You will always be happier if you're not lazy about getting an education. God has given us life and he didn't mean for us to throw it away.

(6) I think that the age should be older that you have to stay in school through high school ages. And that the school in grades one through six should have harder discipline.

(7) In order to decrease the drop-out rate, school must be made challenging. This school, and other schools too, are run like prison camps. More people would want to come to school if there could be field trips, contests, clubs, etc. Many students would stay in school to work on after school clubs such as a math team, or newspaper (a real one), an annual (not a journalism course), a French club, (or any language club). School isn't boring, but prison is!!!

(8) I think that you could reduce the drop-out rate by going on a pass or fail system. Some might pass, but they still get bored and they drop out.

(9) I believe one think that could be done is, several people like to go off campus at lunch and come back; why can't we? They get caught and get suspended and won't come back; so I think that could help some, I think. And after school they like to leave campus and come back, which we can't do.

(10) Nothing can be done about the drop-out rate because each person has a right to do what he wants to do when he gets old enough.

B. What the Teacher Thinks

The following are some comments of our teachers:

(1) Smaller schools with more individual attention would help the poorer student feel like a significant part of the school and would receive more individual attention. Also, vocational school after eighth grade for those who were not academically inclined, I think, would help a great deal.

(2) One of the major problems facing the American educator is the problem of the large number of young students who fail to achieve as a student and, therefore, drop out of school hoping to find a place where each might find achievement. Therefore, to keep the student from potentially becoming a dropout, he should be guided into an area with which he might achieve while in school. This might be done through more emphases placed on vocational training at the ninth grade level.

(3) Parent-teacher-administration-student counseling would be helpful. What you have been doing here--calling in the parents--is good. So many times the parents don't realize exactly what is happening. Some parents aren't interested in the child or his education. Some are, but have no idea what to do. They need guidance. But, how do you get these parents? Forced to come in? We need to insist that there be more parent participation. Also, this needs to be started earlier than junior high age.

(4) a. A restudy should be made of state and local regulations relating to required time of instruction, as well as compulsory school age law.
b. An adult-education program should be established for parents of students who are potential dropouts as an attempt to assist the parents in understanding the educational problems of their children.
c. Labor, management, and school officials

should study and develop realistic programs for youth who must work, yet should continue with their educational program.

C. What the Parents Think

Most parents have a standard comment: "For some reason my son/daughter does/does not like school because he/she is not learning anything," or "My son/daughter just didn't want to go to school." Many would say that we need more cooperation between the school officials and parents.

When this participant had talked to so many people in regard to school holding power and the dropout problem, it was conceived that if anything can be done in regards to potential dropouts it will have to be largely the responsibility of the school faculty and related agencies.

A special meeting of the Unit I faculty was called to discuss the conclusions held by the principal, assistant principal, and counselors. Surprisingly, faculty members concurred and in essence asked the principal to tell them what they could do to help.

With the team approach in mind and with the help of the counselors and assistant principal, the lines of responsibility were decided upon as demonstrated in

Figure 2. (See Figure 2) This organizational procedure has proven invaluable.

D. Discipline and the Dropout

The word discipline has been foremost in the minds of school boards and school administrators since the organization of the early schools of the nation. It has been thought to be a necessity for schools to enforce discipline, have set rules and regulations as to how a student must dress, act, and study before he can learn. This is probably the greatest cause of dropouts from all educational institutions throughout the world.

Psychology has taught us that it is only natural for a person to rebel against things he does not like. Any set of rules, regulations, or policies developed will normally have some opposition. This has been evidenced by the large number of court cases in recent years pertaining to individual rights. The courts have ruled in most cases in favor of the individual.

Even though schools and school systems have lost court case after court case, stringent rules still exist in most junior and senior high schools. Some examples in the Griffin-Spalding County System are:

THE TEAM APPROACH

The chart below illustrates how all school personnel contribute to the effort of keeping students in school through the ninth grade. In this particular diagram the counselor and principal serves as a clearing house for referrals and information. They also shoulder the bulk of responsibility for identifying, facilitating behavior change and follow-up of dropouts and potential dropouts.

ADMINISTRATORS

Provide climate for innovation and movement.

Work for relevant curriculum development.

Referral.

CURRICULUM DIRECTORS

Recognition of need for providing for individual differences.

Work for relevant curriculum development.

Provide encouragement and climate for innovation in instruction and instructional materials.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

TEACHERS

Progress Reports

Individual Attention & Instruction

Identification & Referral

Recognition of Individual Differences

COUNSELOR

Diagnosis
Referral
Group and Individual Counseling
Parent Conferences
Progress Reports
Information
Orientation
Identification
In-Service Activities
(Parents & Teachers)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Family and Children Services

Vocational Rehabilitation

Churches

Community Clubs

PRINCIPAL

VISITING TEACHER

Orient parents to the importance of school and to offerings available there.

Impress parents with the importance of positive reinforcement for child.

Help parent and child feel a part of and to become involved in the community.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

Referral, Diagnosis

SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

Referral, Diagnosis

> No student is permitted to smoke anywhere on the school premises. If he is caught by a system employee, he is subject to punishment ranging from detention hall to suspension.
>
> No student can pass a course of study if he is absent more than five days without a written notice from a doctor that he was too sick to attend school.
>
> No student is permitted to go barefooted on the school premises. If caught doing so, he must remain in the office until parents can bring him shoes.

Rules of this nature irritate teenage students to the degree that they become determined to break them regardless of outcome or consequence.

When the rules are broken within the school, it becomes the responsibility of the principal or the assistant principal to discipline the student. Regardless of how fair and impartial the principal may be, he is a loser. If he hands out harsh punishment either with the paddle, detention hall, extra work, or suspension, he has made an enemy out of the student and his parents. If he counsels with the student to try to reach an understanding, the teachers rebel because he is too easy. Some teachers then refuse to do their jobs better to avoid future problems and as a result, all control is lost and the principal is sometimes fired because he is labeled as a poor disciplinarian.

Spalding Junior High, Unit I is no exception as far as rules and regulations are concerned. Discipline is a big problem. Most of the problems are caused by those students identified previously as potential dropouts. Each day about 25 students are sent to the office by teachers to be disciplined. For purposes here the discipline problems are categorized into three groups:

I. These problems consist primarily of little things that are against someone's rules. Such as: chewing gum, combing hair, tardy to class, no pencil or paper, no book, talking back to the teacher, refusing to take a test, talking, etc.

II. The major problems that call for expulsion for at least one year have grown by leaps until it is almost impossible to retain a large number of students in school. These offenses include: the use of drugs, alcohol, fornication, abusing teachers, destruction of property, intentional disruption of classes, inciting riots, and, in general, the breaking of state laws. These offenders are also among the potential dropouts who become "putouts."

III. The ninth grade is the grade where most students reach their sixteenth birthday. This means in Georgia that they can no longer be made to attend school. Many students who have not tasted too much success look forward to this occasion. They become eligible for the labor market, and are able to get a driver's license.

Four actual problems that have occurred while this Practicum was being developed are illustrated below:

1. Roosevelt has been in the office on several occasions for stealing and willfully destroying property belonging to other persons. He has been suspended, spanked, kept in detention, counseled, and dealt with in several different ways to try to correct this situation. On Friday, March 12, Roosevelt got a pair of scissors and cut another student's sweater right down the back. Roosevelt was suspended and may return to school only with permission of the Board of Education.
2. On Thursday, January 22, during the lunch break, Renee was brought into the office by two teachers for not going to the assigned area during the lunch. Renee was resisting, cursing, and defying

anything the teachers requested or directed her to do. Renee was suspended from school, to be re-admitted only after her parents appeared with her before either the Board of Education or appointed representatives of the Board.

On Tuesday, January 27, Renee came to school and requested re-admission through a conference with the principal and assistant principal. Renee had not informed her parents of her suspension and would not do so because her mother and father were separating and both blamed Renee for their own failures.

Renee was re-admitted to school on probation and performed very well prior to her moving out of the county.

3. On Friday, January 31, two students arrived at school at 9:15 a.m. and asked for tardy passes from the school secretary. She directed the two boys to the assistant principal so they could give him their reason for coming to school so late.

The assistant principal detected the smell of alcohol when he was in conference with the two boys. Kenny and Randy were confronted with the question, "What have you fellas been drinking?" Their reply was negative and both denied drinking any alcoholic beverages. The principal, a teacher, and another school employee were summoned and all school employees also smelled alcohol. Kenny and Randy still denied the charge of drinking alcoholic beverages. A city policeman qualified to administer the alcohol breath test was called and he came to the school, administered the breath test and advised all school employees that alcohol was present on both Kenny's and Randy's breath. Both Kenny and Randy are suspended pending the evidence gathered by the breath test.

Both Randy and Kenny have been transferred to the Opportunity for Learning Center to complete their requirements for ninth grade classes.

4. Brian was found inside a dark storage closet (locked from the inside) in what appeared to be a daze of some sort. Brian was brought to the

office by the assistant principal who suspected that Brian was under the influence of some drug or alcohol. The assistant principal spotted a leather pouch inside the waistband of Brian's trousers and asked for it. Brian gave it to the assistant principal and it was found to contain a marijuana cigarette.

Brian was suspended from school and given the privilege of going to the Opportunity for Learning Center to complete requirements for ninth grade classes.

These problems are typical among the potential dropout. They are referred to by many educators as pre-delinquents and usually fall into one or more of the categories discovered by Larson and Karpas[19] in their study of secondary school discipline. They concluded that the school could do little or nothing with the student who falls into specific categories. They found from their study the following facts:

1. Continued and universal lack of application in most or all subjects.

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[19]Knute G. Larson and M. R. Karpas, Effective Secondary School Discipline, Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1963, p. 170.

2. General agreement among a student's teachers that they can do nothing for him.
3. Continued and obvious bad influence.
4. Continued and frequent truancy.
5. Inability of the counselor to communicate because of cynicism or lack of responsiveness of the student.
6. Constant evasiveness and lying.
7. Extreme and obvious symptoms of mental disorder.
8. An abnormal pre-occupation with sex.

Even though many different kinds of schools and hundreds of agencies have been established since 1963 to work with students of this caliber, the public schools have not been relieved of the pre-delinquents and must continue to attempt to save them.

This participant has recently completed a series of 58 conferences with parents and identified potential dropouts. All of these students had failed their academic studies, without exception, for two full quarters.

The parents of these students were asked to come to the school within a three day period to discuss the work of their child and to review all of his/her records. Each parent was welcomed to the school, and appreciation given to them for their time and interest. The first part of the review centered around the student's grades,

his attendance at school, the number of credits earned, and required credits necessary to go to the tenth grade.

Of the 58 conferences, only one parent took his son out of school. Another parent questioned the fairness of the school and its teachers. In this particular case it was discovered that the student had changed the grades on her report slips from F's to A's. The mother was furious.

This participant is confident that these conferences will save most of these students who otherwise would have dropped out at the end of this school year or sooner.

MECHANICS OF THE PRACTICUM

When teachers were given the names of the potential dropout, care was taken to explain to them that under no circumstances were they to reveal the names of selected students. Instructions were also given in methods of referring the potential dropout to the principal, assistant principal, and counselor. No mention of treatment was discussed with the faculty.

The first step considered to be most important for the immediate problem was that of scheduling classes most suitable for the student's needs. Most of the needs of the potential dropouts were discussed in the identifying process. They were notably weak in the areas of basic skills, therefore, it became apparent that most would be placed in basic classes. This, of necessity, placed them in groups of their own peers where they could realize some success.

The alternatives available were: the Coordinated Vocational Academic Education Program (CVAE), the regular school program, and the alternative school program.

The CVAE Program

The Coordinated Vocational Academic Education Program serves those students 14 years of age and older whose learning styles differ markedly from the college bound student.

The program is designed as an interdisciplinary approach where students are block scheduled (scheduled in a group) in order for each curricular area to be taught in relationship to what the student is doing in the classroom or on the job.

The Math, English, Home Economics, and Industrial Arts teachers constitute a team that meets with the CVAE Coordinator weekly to coordinate their particular disciplines with the occupations or jobs in which the students are engaged.

Students who enter the CVAE Program are assisted in finding jobs. The younger students (14 and 15 year olds) are usually placed in jobs within the school system until they can demonstrate a level of maturity needed to hold jobs in private businesses.

Students receive quarter hour credit for successful

completion of work assignments. Financial assistance is available through the Work Study Program where the student is paid the minimum wage for working. Funds for this program are provided on an 80 per cent state and 20 per cent local funding basis.

Classroom activities in the CVAE Program include guest speakers, resource people, films and filmstrips, occupational kits, etc. There are other activities such as role playing, simulation games, and group discussions. The dignity and importance of all occupations are stressed in these activities.

A Flexible Curriculum

The quarter plan of instruction in use in Spalding Junior High gives enough flexibility to allow the scheduling of the non-achievers and slow learners as well as the average or above student. The curriculum is designed to allow the teacher to prepare and teach on the level needed for a particular class. This practice has been extremely helpful this year when every effort has been and is being made to save more students.

The use of the quarter plan of instruction in the Griffin-Spalding County School System is a result of an

extensive study by the administration and staff of the schools in an attempt to determine what was educationally sound for its students. The system was faced each year with a high dropout rate, high retention rate, and a dissatisfied public with its graduates. Since the implementation of the new system, the 12 barriers or partitions have been removed for all students. Now the parents say the curriculum is designed for the students and not for expediency in the organization of the educational system. The dropout rate in the system has remained virtually stable: 2.90 in 1972-73 to 3.07 in 1974-75.

It is believed that the flexibility of the course of study or curriculum in allowing this school to place students in a class with other students who need the same educational experience is a vital organ of the treatment of the potential dropout and enables him to become a good citizen in his community.

School-Family Relationship

The family is one of the most frequently occurring negative factors common to identified dropouts. The student prone to failure usually comes from a home that

is failure oriented. He has heard nothing but bad news, fussing, quarreling, and fighting. Many of the students at Spalding Junior High are no exception. The county is in large part a bedroom area for Metropolitan Atlanta workers, a home for industrial shift workers, and a few farmers.

Divorce rates are very high, causing many students to have broken homes. Payments from the Department of Family and Children's Service are among the highest in the state. Employment for teenagers is all but nil, and recreation facilities are limited. These are a few of the problems that the school must overcome.

At Spalding Junior High efforts have been made to educate the parts of their responsibility to the school and the school's responsibility to them. This year two days have been set aside as parent visitation days. On these days all teachers reported to work as usual and stayed until eight o'clock at night. All parents were sent letters of invitation to their respective schools for conferences with any professional staff member with whom they wished to talk. During these two days over 600 parents came for conferences. Parents were also

encouraged to come at any time they felt a conference would be beneficial to them or their child. In addition to the special conference days and teacher-parent conferences, the principal, assistant principal, and counselors have held over 500 conferences with parents and students.

In all conferences attempts have been made to make the parent appreciate his importance to the school. Things discussed were: parents' concern about the student's progress, his suggestions toward changes that would benefit the students, and most of all that his help was not only needed but necessary if the school was to continue to carry on a meaningful education program.

Attempts have been made to adopt many of the policies found helpful in other locations in the prevention of dropouts, such as explained by Patricia Sexton[20] in her article on "Education and Income" which states:

> One way the principal can combat the dropout problem is by the re-education of parents to the significance of the fact that education is important and a "must" in our highly technical society. Dropout-prone students are often the result of uninterested parents--

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[20]Patricia Sexton, Education and Income, New York: Viking Press, 1961, p. 109.

parents who do not seem to care if the child attends school, learns, or attains success. Moreover, many low-income parents are fearful of the school.

As Sexton further explains:

> In school, they are likely to feel more ill-at-ease than elsewhere. In this setting, where memories of past experiences are usually less than pleasant, they are likely to feel uncomfortable and self-conscious about their dress and the way they talk and their general behavior. What is more, lacking confidence in themselves and remembering their own school days, they often fear that, if they visit the school, the teacher will scold them or criticize their children's behavior as teachers once criticized their own. This fear is sometimes unfounded, but not always. Teachers sometimes do scold and criticize parents.

An article entitled "Home-School Interaction" by John H. Niemeyer[21] states:

> Any principal, faced with a dropout problem, would do well to consider a special program aimed at changing parents' attitudes toward the school in general and toward education for their own children in particular. For example, consider some of the following guidelines:
>
> 1. Provide the parents with information about the students and the school programs by improving communication between home and school, each may work effectively for the benefit of the student.

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[21]John H. Niemeyer, "Home-School Interaction," The School Dropout, ed. by Daniel Schreiber, Washington: National Education Association, 1964, p. 125.

2. Maintain an 'open door' policy to parents. For this policy to be successful, however, the principal must first evaluate the kind of 'face' his school presents to parents. Too often the visiting parent enters a building in which she first sees a sign, "All visitors report to the main office." She follows arrows to the office, enters, and sees before her a long dull-metal counter behind which many busy clerks are working. There is no receptionist. There are no names in evidence. The parent stands and waits until someone finally comes and asks, "What is it you want?" To present the right 'face' to parents, try setting up attractive reception areas at school entrances. Use student monitors to greet visitors and bring them to the principal's office. Also, be sure to provide a place inside the building where parents can wait for their children during cold weather.

3. Develop after-school and evening programs, add activities that will evoke parent participation. To be most enticing, these programs should be action ones, not listening-to-sessions.

4. Begin or expand adult education programs. These programs should include classes that develop both academic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic, and so forth) and homemaking skills (sewing, cooking, marketing, to name just a few).

5. Use home-school coordinators. These may be either professional or nonprofessional personnel. In either case, they can be most effective in relaying school information to the home, helping parents to assist their children, and even offering homemaking advice. Most important, they convey to parents the school's interest, as well as add a personal touch that is apt to be lost in an efficient school routine.

The Follow-up

The Griffin-Spalding County School System has only one large high school of approximately 2000 students. It becomes very easy for the withdrawn student to become dissatisfied and leave before he learns his way around the campus, or the discipline prone student to be suspended or expelled before he learns the rules and regulations of the high school.

In Spalding Junior High, Unit I much time is spent by all teachers in orientation before the students leave for high school.

This year permission was requested to register all students for the tenth grade on the campus of Spalding Junior High, Unit I and transport the students to the high school for a walk-through of their classes with teachers and the counselor they knew. This permission was granted.

As a result the students were assigned to areas where it is believed they will survive. It will enable them to become acquainted with new teachers and counselors before another registration.

Meantime the counselors, principal, and assistant principal will continue to aid and advise where possible.

The Repeaters

Students repeating a grade have always been a problem. Most are always identified as potential dropouts. The treatment of this group becomes a tenacious job for the principal and counselor. If school officials neglect or attempt to force or harass them in efforts to get more effort from them, they walk off and are gone forever.

At Spalding Junior High a special arrangement has been adopted for this group. It is called among counselors and principals as the "common sense" plan.

When it is discovered that a student has not passed enough hours to go to the tenth grade, he is asked to come in for a review of his record. At this time his course grades are discussed in all areas of study. For instance, if it is found that a student lacks 20 hours having a sufficient number to be promoted, and at the same time it is discovered that he makes passing grades in certain areas, he is given the opportunity of taking all 20 hours in the areas he likes best and has found success. This usually is an inspiration to the student, he stays in

school longer, and in most cases will find himself in one quarter and continue in school.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Most schools have a policy which forbids low achieving students to participate in extra-curricular activities such as athletics, band, hold office positions in clubs, or participate in organizations representing the school. Spalding Junior High does not participate in inter-scholastic competition, therefore, these restrictions are removed allowing all students to participate in all activities.

It is believed that athletics, music, and other special activities have been the factor responsible for saving many students.

In the area of special education the students are integrated into physical education classes, homemaking, business education, and industrial arts. The interest of this group has improved tremendously and only one boy has withdrawn during the year as opposed to eight last year.

In addition to the extra privileges of participation, home visits are made monthly by a teacher of one of these groups.

Alternative Schools

One of the most helpful solutions in the prevention of dropouts has been the establishment of a learning opportunity center by Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education, and a cooperative plan with the Vocational-Technical School.

The establishment of the Opportunity Learning Center was brought about by suggestions of this participant and other secondary school principals with strong support of the superintendent. Its primary purpose was to accommodate unwed mothers, expectant mothers, and adults who had dropped out of school earlier. It began operation with one full time teacher, and in a short time two additional teachers were added. At the present time, 60 students under 18 years of age are enrolled.

The Vocational-Technical School, adjacent to the campus of Spalding Junior High, will accept up to 100 students on a part-day basis. In addition, a special unit has been provided for the non-achiever and the mentally retarded at the insistence of this participant.

The availability of these two alternate routes enable Spalding Junior High to transfer older and dissatisfied

potential dropouts, when satisfactory to the student, parent, and principal.

At the Opportunity Learning Center the student is permitted to attend classes for four and one-half hours per day either in the morning or at night. This allows him to have a part-time job if he so desires. The state laws will not permit students to do this in regular public schools unless they are enrolled in vocational training.

During this Practicum year, three overage mentally retarded, and four overage slow achievers have been transferred to the Vocational-Technical School. Reports show that all are making steady progress.

Those going to the Opportunity Learning Center have consisted of three expectant mothers, three who were assigned by the court for drug abuse, two assigned by probation officers for intoxication at school and continued truancy.

Others transferred were primarily 17 and 18 year olds who were happy with younger students and wanted to work part-time. In essence, 23 "saves" from the dropout column have been made.

All students who are transferred to these two places remain under the supervision of Spalding Junior High, Unit I for the school year in which they are transferred.

RESULTS OF THE PRACTICUM

The results of this Practicum have been both satisfactory and frustrating. To see a faculty and parents of the potential dropouts so receptive to the idea of doing something to help has been very gratifying. To see a student leave school that needed help so desperately, yet could not be reached, was frustrating. Yet, there is some consolation to be able to say, "I tried."

There have been noticeable changes that could probably have been construed as the results of this practicum effort, such as: (1) a reduction in the number of students sent to the assistant principal and principal for disciplinary action, (2) a reduction in grade failures, and (3) an increase in the school attendance.

The number of discipline cases referred to the principal's office was 60 per cent of the preceding year or a reduction of 40 per cent. There have been no permanent explusions; one, two, and three day suspensions have run only 30 per cent of the total number of the preceding year.

Due to the practicum effort, the teacher grades have consistently improved since the first grading period. Because of the improvement in the grades, the students have shown more interest and motivation to stay in school. One of the most common characteristics of the dropout is poor achievement in grades. This was also found in the study of the dropout problem in Iowa Schools by Van Dyke and Hoyt[22]. The average daily attendance (ADA) has consistently run three per cent higher than the preceding year.

This practicum has brought about a careful identification of the selected students by the principals and counselors of the eighth and ninth grades; the class supervision of their teachers, the efforts made by the counselors to carefully schedule them in classes where they could perform. Close contact by school officials with their parents has assisted the hardcore problem dropout in the school.

Other good results have been the development of a closer working relationship with community agencies. The Mental Health Clinic has been most helpful with a

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[22]Van Dyke and Hoyt, op. cit., pp. 9, 12, 19.

number of students; the Police Department has been cooperative with us in working with those who were caught for various offenses, and the juvenile probation officers have helped with day to day supervision, especially with the girls.

Most important to this participant has been the strong support given by the superintendent and board of education. They have been generous in their tolerance of repeated questions for information, and extremely interested in finding a way to reduce the dropout rate in the system.

EVALUATION

It is this writer's contention that all objectives of this practicum have been met either in full or to a degree as set forth in the practicum proposal. The objectives were as follows.

1. To identify potential dropouts at the beginning of the school term.

These identified students were selected in the months of July and August, 1975, previous to the opening of school. Some borderline students were held in abeyance until the beginning of the term as to placement.

Statistics in the principal's office show that every student who has dropped out of school since September until the early part of April was identified as a potential dropout. Intensive measures were taken by the school officials to keep these potential dropouts in school.

2. To set up machinery to handle the potential dropout.

The team approach to the dropout problem was established in the faculty and has functioned better than expected the first year in use.

The school staff agreed at the beginning of the term

that it would be desirable to schedule the potential dropouts in curriculum areas in which they could reap a measure of success among their peers. The quarter system plan served well the students who needed special remedial help in that the teachers could teach on the level of the student. The administrative staff and entire faculty kept in close contact with parents. Special treatment was given to the repeaters. Potential dropouts were permitted to participate in extra-curricular activities even though their grades were not as high as the teachers would have desired them to be. Alternative schools were provided the hard-core potential dropouts through the Vocational-Technical School nearby and the Opportunity Learning Center. The Cooperative Vocational Academic Educational program was permitted to enroll up to 80 students to further challenge them in the area of the World of Work. An intensive supervision and counseling of these potential dropouts has taken place throughout the 1975-1976 year by members of the school staff.

3. To reduce the dropout rate in Spalding Junior High, Unit I from eight per cent to four per cent.

Reaching this objective has been a pleasant surprise to the participant. Table 1 demonstrates that effort in

TABLE I

A COMPARISON OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE GRIFFIN-SPALDING SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE STUDENTS ATTENDING SPALDING JR. HIGH, UNIT I WHO DROPPED OUT FROM 1971-1976

	YEARS									
	1971-1972		1972-1973		1973-1974		1974-1975		1975-1976	
	No. Dropouts		No. Dropouts		No. Dropouts		No. Dropouts		No. Dropouts	
	Systemwide	Spald. I	Systemwide	Spald. I	Systemwide	Spald. I	Systemwide	Spald. I	Systemwide	Spald. I
Boys	183	51	166	51	154	49	178	48	165	28
Girls	126	17	130	26	114	33	139	45	173	15
TOTAL	309	68	296	77	268	82	317	93	338	43
Enrollment	10,118	688	10,055	709	10,286	714	10,333	659	8,950	818
Percent Dropout	3.06	9.88	2.90	10.86	2.60	11.48	3.07	14.11	3.02	5.26

this regard was successful.

This participant learned after much research on a county-wide basis that the dropout rate at Spalding Junior High, Unit 1 from the 1971-72 to 1974-75 period was even greater than eight per cent as stated in the objectives. In fact, the average of the four years preceeding the year under study of 11.58 per cent for the school. Although this Nova student did not succeed in reducing the dropout rate to four per cent, it was reduced to 5.26 per cent this year from 14.11 per cent in 1974-75 which is a hefty reduction.

The success of the practicum in meeting this objective is borne out by the comparison of the Spalding Junior High, Unit 1 percentage of dropouts, i.e., 9.88 per cent in 1971-72; 10.86 per cent in 1972-73; 11.48 per cent in 1973-74; and 14.11 per cent in 1974-75. The dropout percentage had risen steadily each year in the past four years until the present year, 1975-76, which saw a dramatic downfall in the percentage of dropout rate to 5.26 per cent. It is interesting to note that the county-wide enrollment for 1975-76 was 8,950, down from the high of the five year period of 10,333 in 1974-75. At the same time Spalding

Junior High, Unit I had an enrollment from a high of 714 in 1973-74 to 818 in 1975-76. The enrollment is not a factor, however, regarding the percentage of dropouts.

The county-wide percentage of dropout rate has remained fairly steady over the five year period. Up until the present school year, 1975-76, the Spalding Junior High, Unit I dropout rate was from three to four times greater than the county-wide dropout rate. But this past year because of the extra efforts of many people the junior high school rate was only 2.24 per cent greater than the county as a whole--3.02 per cent county, 5.26 per cent Spalding Junior High, Unit I. Does this mean the practicum efforts have been highly successful? Possibly so. One this is sure--the figures speak for themselves. Maybe a better quality student entered the school this year, maybe his parents were more interested in his success than former parents, maybe the increased conscientiousness of the faculty and administration redoubled their efforts to increase school attendance and "save" more students.

4. To reduce the dropout rate at Spalding Junior High Unit I below the county average.

As demonstrated in Table 2 Spalding Junior High, Unit I

TABLE II

A COMPARISON OF THE PERCENTAGE OF SYSTEMWIDE STUDENTS ENROLLED AND THE DROPOUTS FURNISHED BY SPALDING JR. HIGH I, 1971-1976

Year	Percent of Students Enrolled in Spalding Jr. High, Unit I	Percent of Systemwide Dropouts Furnished by Spalding Jr. High, I	Total Enrollment Systemwide	Total Enrollment Spalding, I
1971-72	6.80	22.01	10,118	688
1972-73	7.05	26.01	10,055	709
1973-74	6.94	30.60	10,286	714
1974-75	6.38	29.34	10,333	659
1975-76	9.14	12.72	8,950	818

enrolled approximately ten per cent of the system-wide enrollment and furnished approximately 13 per cent of its dropouts in 1975-76. This objective was not fully reached. However, a reduction of 16 per cent was obtained over the previous year, 1974-75.

Perhaps a better way of illustrating the effectiveness of the dropout prevention program at Spalding Junior High, Unit I this year is to get the average dropout percentage for the five years under study (1971-76). This average of the five years is 24.14 per cent which is almost twice the percentage of system-wide dropouts furnished by Spalding Junior High, Unit I this present year (12.72 per cent).

5. To work individually with under achievers and discipline problems to see how many "saves" can be made.

It is evident that much progress has been made in this area; however, it is difficult to measure just how many "saves" have been made. Records have established on 23 transfer students that clearly stated they would quit school unless they could attend either the Vocational Technical School or the Opportunity Learning Center.

The accomplishments of this practicum appear to have reached much farther than the objectives in related areas. Discipline cases have been drastically reduced. During the 1974-75 school year 903 cases were referred to the assistant principal, principal, and counselor. During the 1975-76 school year only 425 cases have been referred. Community interest has increased and the realization of the advantages of contact with parents and many other side effects that have contributed to a good school year have taken place.

Perhaps a human interest example which actually took place will illustrate the extent to which this participant and other members of the faculty were willing to go in order to "save" students from dropping out. On three separate occasions a student was suspended and was seen on the streets of Griffin, Georgia. Representatives of the Juvenile Probation Office, not knowing the students were under a short suspension, brought the students direct to school rather than take them home. Since the students were actually at school, the administration decided to give them another chance and to lift the balance of suspension.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is this participant's contention, and the literature bears this out, that the ninth grade student is perhaps the most difficult student to deal with in the span of the K-12 curriculum. More attention should be given to students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, who are having difficulties. Changes in curriculum and teaching methods should take place. Crash programs should be inaugurated if at all possible to save those students who will later dropout in a higher grade. A constant review of the curriculum should take place.

Students should be given more choice in the subjects they wish to study in school. Many educational authorities have found in their study of this subject that most students would return to school if they could choose their subjects.

Other recommendations this participant would like to make are:

1. That parents become more involved with the school their child attends.
2. That teachers come to the realization that the

school exists for the benefit of the child and not for the convenience of the teachers.

3. That school officials become more aware that all students do not have the same needs.

The efforts of this practicum proved that a dropout prevention program can work even in a junior high school. This success was brought about through the efforts of the administration and teachers of Spalding Junior High, Unit I working with ninth grade students on a one-to-one basis.

It is never too late for a teacher or principal to show compassion and to let the student know that she is interested in the problems and needs of the individual student.

FURTHER APPLICATION OF THE PRACTICUM

Copies of the practicum will be given to the board of education members as well as an explanation of the findings and results. It is believed that the principles and practices used can be adopted in all secondary schools.

Copies of the practicum will be available to any school system on request.

The practicum will be expanded and extended into next school year.

Copies will be sent to the State Department of Education for examination and study for possible application on a statewide level.

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